

REMARKS35 U.S.C. 102(b) Rejection

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-9, 20 and 22 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,075,375 ("Burkhart"). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

Independent claim 1 requires, among other things:

a plurality of probes arranged in a spaced relation around a stage that is adapted to support a substrate, wherein each probe includes a detection portion that is adapted to ... move from a known starting position toward an edge of the substrate that is supported by the stage.

Independent claim 20 similarly requires, among other things:

providing a plurality of detectors in a spaced relation around a stage that is adapted to support a substrate and directing each detector to move from a known starting position toward the edge of the substrate;

With regard to claims 1 and 20, the Examiner states that Burkhart discloses a sensing system and method employing a plurality of probes with detection portions that "move from a known starting position (column 4 lines 40-56) toward an edge of the substrate that is supported by the stage" (Office Action, page 2, lines 17-18). However, column 4, lines 40-56 of Burkhart do not describe a plurality of detection portions that move toward an edge of a substrate supported by a stage; rather, the cited portion of Burkhart discloses how electrodes may be formed on a surface of a wafer support pedestal. There is no discussion of moving the electrodes from a known starting position toward an edge of a substrate that is

supported by a stage (see Applicants' claim 1) or directing each detector to move from a known starting position toward the edge of the substrate (see Applicants' claim 20). For at least this reason, Applicants submit that claim 1 and claim 20 are not anticipated by Burkhart.

Claims 2-9 which depend from claim 1, and claim 22 which depends from claim 20, similarly are not anticipated by Burkhart for at least the same reason. Additionally, the electrodes of Burkhart do not appear to be switches adapted to contact the edge of a substrate (see Applicants' claim 2) or to be capable of any movement or retraction (see Applicants' claims 3-9 and 22).

35 U.S.C. 103(a) Rejection

The Examiner has rejected claims 10-19, 21, 23 and 24 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Burkhart in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,624,897 (Little). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

The Examiner states that "Burkhart et al disclose everything except for a plurality of drive mechanisms, each drive mechanism coupled to a respective one of the probes and adapted to move the respective one of the probes toward and away from the edge of the substrate" (Office Action, page 5, lines 8-11). However, as described above, Burkhart does not disclose moving a plurality of probes or detectors from a known starting position toward an edge of substrate supported by a stage. Applicants' claim 16 contains similar limitations.

Because Little does not overcome the shortcomings of Burkhart described above, a combination of Burkhart and Little does not produce:

a plurality of probes arranged in a spaced relation around a stage that is adapted to support a substrate, wherein each probe includes a detection portion that is adapted to ... move from a known starting position toward an edge of the substrate that is supported by the stage;

or;


providing a plurality of detectors in a spaced relation around a stage that is adapted to support a substrate and directing each detector to move from a known starting position toward the edge of the substrate;

as claimed in Applicants' claims 1 and 20, respectively. Accordingly, claims 10-15 which depend from claim 1, and claims 21 and 23 which depend from claim 20, are submitted as being patentable for at least these reasons, as are claims 16-19.

It is further noted that there is no motivation to combine to drive mechanism of Little with the electrodes of Burkhart as the electrodes of Burkhart appear to be stationary.

For the above reasons, all claims are believed to be in condition for allowance. A request for a one month extension of time is being submitted herewith along with the requisite fee. No other fees are believed necessary, however, if any additional fees are required, please charge Deposit Account No. 04-1696.

Respectfully Submitted,


Brian M. Dugan, Esq.
Registration No. 41,720
Dugan & Dugan, PC
Attorneys for Applicants
(914) 332-9081

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Tarrytown, New York